

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a system for providing secured access to a software rental or a postage metering system. The virtual postage meter software of this invention enables a user to print postage indicia on documents, envelopes or labels. To generate valid postage indicia the virtual meter software is executed on a first computer while it is in communication with the remotely located second computer. All communication between the first computer and the second computer utilize data encryption algorithms to preserve the security and integrity of the data transferred. In one embodiment, the second computer is a collection of one or more computers with virtual postage meter enabling software capable of communicating simultaneously to a number of user computers that are concurrently executing the virtual postage meter software. The second computer is connected to one or more US FIPS 140-1 security level 3 or better certified cryptographic devices identified as Postal Security Devices (PSD). The printed postage indicia appears as a two-dimensional barcode that includes digital signature, amount of postage, ZIP code and other relevant information.